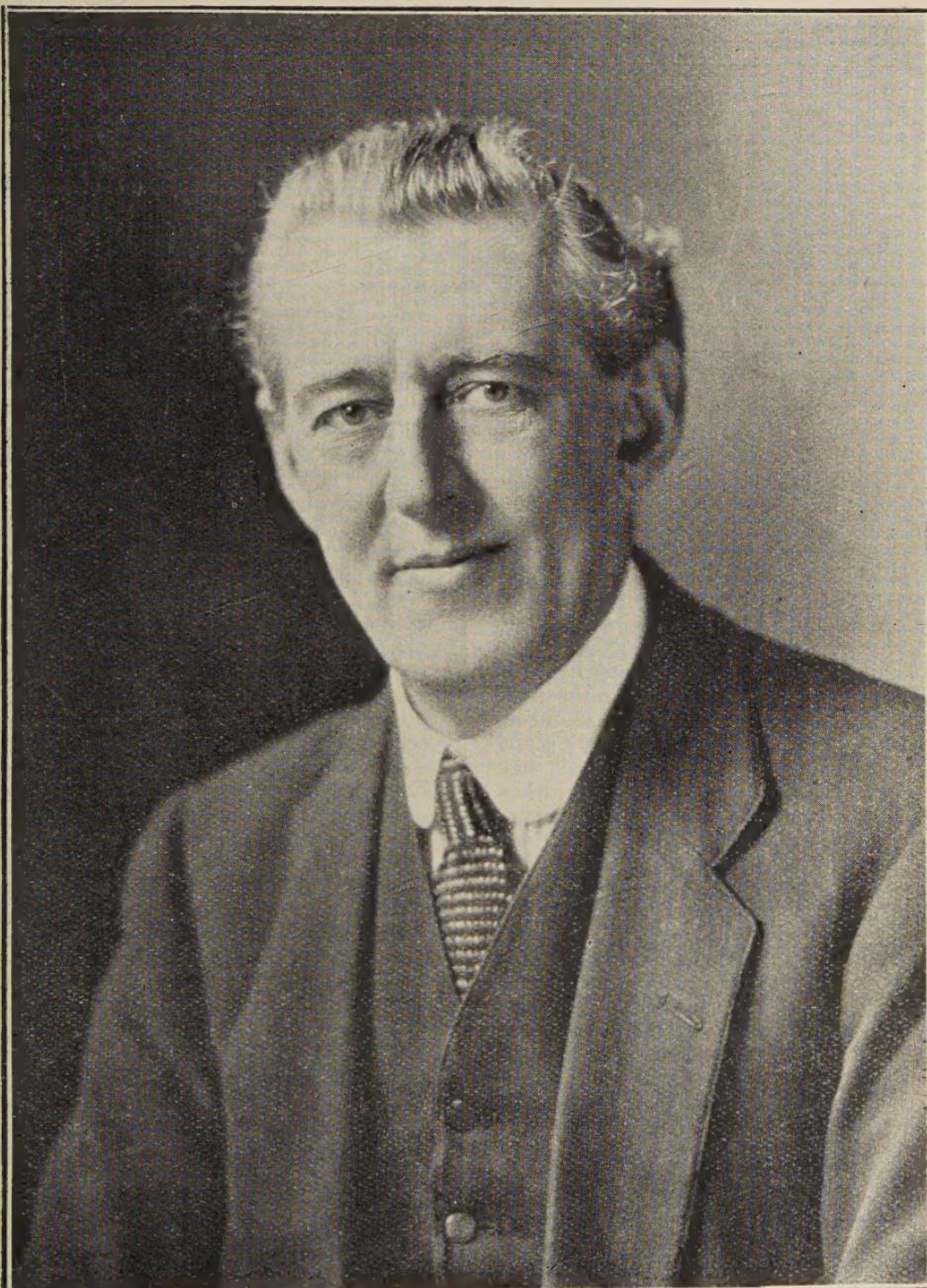


# THE LABOUR ORGANISER

No. 63

APRIL, 1926.

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EGERTON P. WAKE

*National Agent, The Labour Party*

# EGERTON WAKE: Organiser of Victory

By HERBERT TRACEY

Egerton Wake is the Carnot of the political Labour movement. Carnot, as every school boy knows, was the man who created the armies of revolutionary France, and the title "Organiser of Victory" was bestowed upon him by the Assembly after he had, in a single year, organised victory for fourteen armies of the Republic. Within his own sphere Mr. Wake has accomplished a definite feat of organisation and political engineering work that is not unworthy of comparison with the achievements of the French military genius who transformed revolutionary ardour and fervent enthusiasm into rational, disciplined, orderly, and efficient action.

For the task which Mr. Wake undertook when he became National Agent of the Labour Party in 1919—a significant date, as will appear in the course of this appreciation of his work—he possesses peculiar qualifications. It would be difficult to name a man in the history of the political parties who was more obviously designated by training and experience for the organising work connected with the rise of a new party. Heaven has watched over the fortunes of the Labour Party and has taken particular care to provide the right man, at the right moment, for the work that required to be done during the evolution of the political working-class movement. No man could have done better than Keir Hardie did the pioneer work which made a political working-class party possible by bringing together in the unity of a common purpose the trade unions and the Socialist organisations. To guide the infant steps of the old L.R.C. along the Parliamentary path until it was able to stand up and announce itself a genuine political party and ultimately to reach the seat of Government was manifestly the task for which Mr. Ramsay MacDonald was selected by destiny; just as Mr. Arthur Henderson was as clearly designated by destiny to combine, unify and control the powerful and not always harmonious impulses of a movement that has always had more ideas than it can manage and frequently requires to be brought back to earth from its soaring flights into the future. So, also, in due time, and adequately equipped, Egerton Wake emerged with

an effect of inevitability to undertake with an assured and confident hand the task of moulding, extending, and consolidating the electoral organisation of the Party at the moment when a fast addition was made to the electorate and a multitude of quite new problems of political engineering had to be met and solved.

Every fresh turn in the career of Mr. Wake seems now to have been a preparation for the position he fills to-day. He was born at Chatham, in Kent, 55 years ago, and after an elementary school education he turned to the study of law and accountancy. For a period he served as a clerk in the office of the Town Clerk of his native place, and there acquired the rudiments of his present extensive knowledge of electoral law, registration work, election procedure, and official methods of dealing with the problems of our representative system. Such a preliminary training was invaluable. Then came a period of active work as an organiser and propagandist for the I.L.P., in the days when the I.L.P. was the most vigorous, enterprising, and effective propagandist body in the political field. As organising secretary of the Liverpool I.L.P., chairman of the Lancashire and Cheshire Division of the I.L.P., and member of its N.A.C. as well as chairman of the Chatham and District Labour Party (later its secretary) and of the local Trades Council, Mr. Wake found ample opportunity of acquiring that extraordinarily detailed knowledge of the movement in all parts of the country that he finds so useful to-day. He knows the movement from centre to circumference (for he served upon the National Executive from 1914 to 1918), and its widest and most remote ramifications through this island are as familiar to him as the lines of his hand.

This is not a grotesque exaggeration of the fact: Mr. Wake's personal and intimate acquaintance with the personalities of the movement, the peculiarities of local leadership, of geographical and organic relations between one constituency organisation and another, of the strength and weakness of local methods of propaganda, and of the whole machinery of the movement from one end of the country to the other, is

unrivalled. It could not possibly have been acquired by one who sat in an office to direct the activities of such a movement as ours. It is the result of years of work in the field, of a close and intensive study of the local situation at election times and during repeated visits for organising and propaganda. "Intensive" is the word to apply to the study Mr. Wake has made of the movement in all its phases, and to different aspects of its work in the arena of public affairs. When he lived at Barrow-in-Furness where he went from Chatham in 1908 he acquired experience both as agent and organiser for the local Labour Party, and as a member of the Borough Council, continuing in this respect a development of his activities that had started in Chatham. His work as a special propagandist and organiser for the Union of Democratic Control from 1915 to 1917, and his field work as National Organising Secretary for the Labour Party for a couple of years before he assumed the office of National Agent, had the result of deepening and extending his knowledge of the problem of political organisation in its widest ranges.

Mr. Wake came to the office of the National Agent at a critical time in the history of the Party. Two events of major importance mark the date: (1) the passing of the Representation of the People Act, which practically doubled the electorate at a stroke and brought into the calculations of political agents and leaders a new factor in the person of the woman voter; and (2) the General Election of 1918, which gave the first opportunity in twelve years of testing the electoral machinery of the Parties.

Every Franchise Act has had important effects upon the organisation of the citizens for political purposes. The party system, which has been the most powerful and influential of all the forces which have educated the citizen for political duties and enabled him to discharge them, did not originate until the passing of the Reform Act of 1832. It is true that historians like Macaulay and Guizot find the origins of the party system in the parliamentary differences that arose in the second session of the Long Parliament in 1641; but that meant the grouping of Members of Parliament according to differences of political conviction and public policy—it did not mean organisation of the electorate on Party lines. This did not

begin until after 1832. With the resignation of the Peel Government in 1835 we have the first clear instance in our political history of a whole Ministry resigning after failing to obtain the support of the electors. The two Acts extending the suffrage in 1867 and 1884 carried the party system, and especially the electoral organisation of the Parties, a good deal further. It was, for example, certain provisions of the Act of 1867 which called into being the political "caucus," or, as we should now call it, the Party association. In order to evade a clause in that Act the Radicals of Birmingham under the leadership of William Harris, organised the famous "Birmingham caucus," the type of local political machinery which later became known as the Liberal Association; the prototype of the more important forms of democratic Party organisation which we have to-day.

It is not my intention to attempt any amateur appraisal of the effects that the last Franchise Act has had upon the electoral machinery of the Parties; readers of this journal, who have a specialised knowledge of these matters, know more about it than I do. But it is, I think, relevant to this summary of Mr. Wake's achievement to point out that the addition of vast numbers of new electors, and the enfranchisement of women in particular, created for him, at the very beginning of his work as National Agent, a problem of exceptional interest from the point of view of political dynamics.

A new and strictly non-Party body of electors had been brought into the field, without the tradition of loyalty to any fixed and settled principles of political action, an apparently unorganisable mass, possessing none of those continual contacts and associations for political discussion that men possess. To weld the women voters together for Party purposes without intensifying the sex antagonisms that had been produced by the long and bitter struggle for the vote, to relate their organisation to the established machinery of the Party without making the Party machine a steam-roller which would flatten out the individuality of the women members and suppress their freedom and initiative in public affairs—this was a formidable problem in political engineering work. It is a matter of history that the Labour Party solved it first of all the

(Concluded on page 79.)

# OUT OF THE RUT

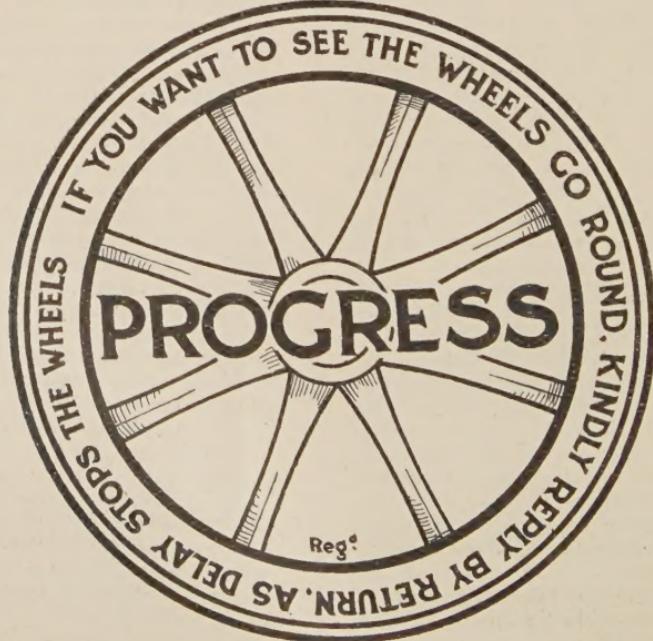
IDEAS AND ACTIVITIES IN BRIEF.

When the author of "Helen's Babies" told us that delightful story of Budge and Toddy wanting to see the wheels go round he never anticipated the day when the Editor of the "Labour Organiser" might use this tag on his letter heads. We, however, did this a few years ago and now Frank Roberts the organising secretary of the Central Southwark Labour Party has gone one better and in a registered design which he has originated, we have the wheel of progress and a slightly amended wording. The device is used as a tab which may be stuck on the left-hand corner of a letter head or on the outside of an envelope, and the sample before us, printed on geranium red paper, arrests attention without a doubt. The envelope or the letter which flaunts this flaming device will certainly not escape attention, however big the pile of correspondence in which it may get ensconced. Mr. Roberts tells us that the printers are prepared to supply Labour agents with quantities on either red or yellow paper printed from the same block at the price of 10/6 per thousand or 7/6 per five hundred. A larger quantity might be

printed at a lower rate. Apply Mr. Frank Roberts, Labour Offices, 124, Walworth Road, London, S.E.17.

We regret to note that the Stockport "Observer" has now ceased publication. We are unaware of any special reason and can only assume that the expenses incidental to the publication of an orthodox provincial journal have proved too much for Labour resources. This demise serves again to illustrate the moral that has been drawn so many times in the "Labour Organiser" to the effect that Labour should not hesitate in attempting the imitation of Capitalist organs, both in regard to size and conduct. We want "the little paper with the punch," and the Labour movement can support an abundance of these sharp-shooters where it cannot afford to maintain a single battery of big guns. By the way, this is a new analogy, so many friends have chosen to copy our old similitude concerning the submarine and the battleship!

Reports are reaching us concerning the successes of Local Parties with their



1926 calendars. The Bristol East Labour Party distributed no less than 15,000 royal octavo card calendars and this effect enabled the candidate's photograph to be placed in every home in the Division—quite a good effort. The West Bromwich Labour Party produced a more elaborate card, approximately twice the size with a tear-off calendar. The candidate of course was at the top and there was a nice reproduction of the new Labour home in Sandwell Road, West Bromwich, which premises have been acquired at a cost of £1,700 as a home for Labour in the Division. A thousand calendars were run off and these were sold at threepence each. We understand that double the number will be necessary for 1927.

Reference to West Bromwich reminds us of the magnificent gathering recently held in the Town Hall as a welcome home to "F.O.R." on his return from the West Indies. The accommodation of the hall is 1,500 and the seats were all filled at a charge of sixpence gallery and threepence body of hall. The agent, Mr. A. Guest, is to be blamed for the following choruses which were rendered with gusto.

#### CHORUSES.

*Tune : It Ain't Gonna Rain No More.*  
Our Champion has been sailing far,  
To brethren o'er the seas :  
The Message of Hope through Labour's  
Cause

He's carried to West Indies.

#### Chorus—

Oh ! we welcome home "F.O." once  
more,  
We welcome home "F.O." ;  
From England's shores he's been away,  
So welcome home "F.O."

A royal welcome he received—

They loved him as do we—

Ten thousand voices sang his praise  
And cheered him loud with glee.

*Chorus—*Oh ! we welcome home "F.O."  
etc.

*Tune : Show me the Way to go Home.*  
Show him the way to come home,  
For he has been away so very long,  
We want to have him back amongst us  
here again,  
With his fiddle and his songs,  
No matter where he roams,  
O'er land or sea or foam,

We shall always want him to come back  
here—  
Three cheers for our "F.O."

That untiring organisation, the Birmingham Labour Propaganda Committee, are responsible for the following "Dont's" in relation to outdoor meetings. The hon. secretary, Mr. John Webb, of 44, Osborn Road, Sparkbrook, Birmingham, has kindly given us permission to reproduce them here.

DON'T forget to advertise your meetings "by chalking" and such other means as from time to time may be deemed advisable.

DON'T start your meeting half-an-hour after the advertised time ; it is bad business and causes many people to go away who might otherwise remain. Always start promptly : it pays.

DON'T forget to give the speaker due notice of time and place of meeting, trams, etc., and the exact time you expect him to be there. It is very discouraging to have to wait about for a meeting to be started.

DON'T forget to thank the speaker for his services, and also to ask what his expenses are ; it is courteous and his due.

DON'T forget to always have a few members of the Party ready to form the nucleus of a crowd, this will cause others to stop and listen.

DON'T forget to have someone ready with one or more helpful questions to put to the speaker, as this always draws the crowd nearer to the platform and makes the meeting more interesting for all.

DON'T grumble if the numbers are small, remember they may be very intelligent. Small beginnings often result in having large meetings if you stick to your pitch.

DON'T forget that courtesy to opponents at meetings often gets recruits to the ranks of Labour.

#### Last but not least.

DON'T forget to have some literature on hand for distribution. You can get 1,000 leaflets for 5/- from the Secretary of the Propaganda Committee, title "Supply and Demand."

In our January (1926) issue we replied to a question as to the eligibility for election to an Urban District Council of the wife of a 'bus conductor employed by the Council. We are at liberty now to say that our reference was to the candidature of Mrs. Robert Evans for the Caerphilly Urban District Council. We note that an opposite opinion was expressed in another responsible quarter, nevertheless, we adhere to the views we then expressed and we are glad to see that Mrs. Evans was prepared to put the matter to the test and went to the poll. Unfortunately, the opposition candidate was returned by 591 votes to 540 polled for Mrs. Evans. We feel sure that on the next try Labour will top the poll. We have read with particular interest the enlightened Labour programme which Mrs. Evans outlined in her address.

We don't know on what authority Essex would be dubbed a backward area, but certainly on March 20th, the men and women of Essex rose "as one man" and provided a really wonderful organisation conference and demonstration. The venue was Witham, a little town of 2,000 electors, with but 400 chairs to go round, yet seating accommodation was required for 3,500. This little Essex town must have wondered what was on when the great mobilisation was complete. The arrangements were in the hands of Mr. L. R. Roberts, the local agent, Mr. W. H. Holmes, district organiser, Coun. P. F. Pollard (agent, Colchester), with Messrs. Russell Davey and W. H. Phillips, the divisional secretaries of South-East Essex and Chelmsford respectively. It was a great advantage to have placed at the Party's disposal an extension of some new works at Witham belonging to the candidate, Mr. V. G. Crittall. But the wonder still remains even when one allows for the fact that the first Labour Premier was down to speak at the demonstration. There was a morning conference, presided over by Mr. E. P. Wake, national agent. An inclusive fee of 1/6 admitted to this, to the lunch and to the demonstration. We understand that while the accounts have not yet been settled the demonstration yielded a good margin of profit and this point is particularly satisfactory in view of the very necessary costs of printing, advertising and other provisions incidental to the gathering. We have been

favoured with a copy of the final detailed arrangements, and have been struck by the attention given to the convenience and comfort of those travelling from a distance. Train arrangements were most carefully worked out and guarantees given for special trains. Parking facilities for those travelling by road was also arranged with the police.

A tip to agents intended to be passed on is sent us by Mr. S. J. Gee, of the North Norfolk Division. A form is printed with the names of each of the polling districts in the constituency, and down-ruled in suitable columns for a tabular statement of the membership in the various districts. A number of these forms are printed without the down rules; in an agent's office the advantage of having long slips containing the list of polling districts is obvious, for such slips may be adapted to many uses. Mr. Gee finds them most convenient.

The next tip is the little form printed below, which speaks for itself.

Dear Friend,

Will you kindly write out below a list of the Parish Councillors for the Parish of

and indicate those which are Labour in the right-hand column.

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
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8	
9	
10	
11	
12	

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*Manager*

## ABOUT LABOUR PAPERS

*Read this to your Local Labour Party.*

Why should we desire all the burden, machinery, yes and the padding, plus the journalistic incubus in a wage sense, of the normal provincial paper? We believe there is a great future before Labour provincial journalism; that this wing of Labour is yet only in its infancy, but that if it is to succeed it must strike out on its own original lines, defy all precedents, and be as original in its form, as it is divided from its enemies by its principles.

There is the question first of all of get-up. Why on earth should Labour need a huge and many-paged sheet such as the Capitalist issues? \*

Labour papers must be smaller and there must be more of them. They will contain propaganda matter and news principally, with a very contracted advertisement revenue, and if the wisest counsels prevail they will form part and parcel of the machinery of the

Party; to be distributed through its collectors rather than by and through the ordinary wholesale channels.

A genuine live paper eagerly read from week to week or month to month need actually not consist in the beginning of more than one quarto sheet printed both sides—we would even say an octavo sheet.

In these days of broadcasting, picture palaces, and abundant literature, the little pungent paper with the punch can be what the submarine is to the battleship; and it is precisely that comparison which we wish to point to as good for Labour papers. We would advocate that every Labour centre, not necessarily the Divisional Party, should seek to get its own organ, but let it be the humble and effective one involving no great financial risk, nor journalistic salary, but such as can be pocketed and pushed from door to door or in field or factory, and on any and every occasion where the Labour missionaries go forth.

“The Labour Organiser,”  
December, 1925.

## SOME REPORTS AND BALANCE SHEETS.

A noteworthy feature of the annual report and accounts of the Preston Trades and Labour Council is the amount received in affiliation fees which totals £324 5s. 6d., and the fact that this is based on a flat rate of 6d. per member per annum. At the end of December 71 societies were affiliated to the Council with a paid-up membership of 12,524 and there was only one small branch in arrears with its contributions. It will be noted therefore that the 6d. per member has been fully realised. A very satisfactory feature has been the attention given this year to women's organisations, there being seven sections with approximately 500 members at the close of the year. Early this year the Council adopted a scheme for the collection of individual contributions to the fighting fund, and in one ward some £2 per week is being collected while two other wards are averaging about 30s. each. Last year some £107 odd was received on behalf of the election fund, a sum with which many Parties would be well content as the result of one year's efforts. It is gratifying, therefore, to see that this rate of accumulation is to be accelerated, and that the Preston Labour Party are not leaving their election fund to the last minute. Agent: Mr. W. E. Morris, Labour Institute, Preston.

Extraordinary activity on the part of the Ward Committees and Women's Sections is disclosed in the report of the Bristol East D.L.P. The accounts are interesting for the detail which they give concerning the finances of each ward and section, and so far has development been carried that it has been necessary to present one balance sheet showing the affairs of the Divisional Party, and another statement showing the summarised position of the wards. The Party itself shows a balance of assets over liabilities amounting to £655 2s. 8d., while the wards disclose a further total credit balance of £259 12s. 10d. During the year no less than £1,147 16s. 1d. has been raised by the wards; £856 2s. 9d. was spent, of which, however, the hall fund and bazaar would account for £600. We should like to number the Bristol East among the four-figure Parties, and as the membership reaches 654 (an increase of

133) this ideal should soon be attained. The report indicates that intensive organisation is being accomplished and victories at the local polls are the result. We are glad, too, to see that unceasing propaganda is taking place.

Secretary and Agent: Mr. H. E. Rogers, 84, Church Road, Redfield, Bristol.

We remember a few years ago visiting the Rugby Labour Party when the movement was in the unhappy position of possessing a heavy adverse liability and at the same time fighting against a high degree of unemployment in the town. We have before us a statement of accounts for ten months ending March 18th, and this discloses a balance in hand of no less than £288 16s. against which there are no liabilities. We further understand that there is approximately £100 in the hands of the Women's Section. £110 4s. 2d. was secured through the contributions of individual members, £155 1s. 2½d. was the outcome of a bazaar, and the remaining items of income contain nothing from any outside sources. This state of affairs reflects great credit on the officers of the Party who have been responsible for the change of affairs, and it indicates a spirit in the Party worthy of great praise. A commission is paid on individual members' contributions, and for the ten months this absorbed £12 5s. 5d. This method of collection has therefore justified itself.

Secretary: Mr. R. W. Bodcote, 4, Pendred Road, Croop Hill, New Bilton.

The mention of Colne Valley recalls that well-remembered afternoon nearly twenty years ago when the news came through that Victor was in. Though the seat to-day is held by Mr. Philip Snowden the millennium in Colne valley has not arrived so early as was expected that day eighteen years ago. Indeed, the D.L.P. judging from the report and balance sheet has even yet considerable difficulties to contend with, though there is an increased income from affiliation fees, individual members and organisation fund. It seems a case where the cart has arrived before the horse. But, anyway, the horse won!

Agent and Secretary: Mr. S. Eastwood, 53, Wood Top, Slaithwaite.

Lots of interest attaches to the record of progress made by the Derby Labour Party last year. Though a borough individual members in Derby pay their fees to the wards who each have their separate accounts and remit an affiliation fee to the Central Party very similarly to Local Parties in a County Division. The summarised accounts, therefore, of the Derby Labour Party are exclusive of a substantial income reaped by some two dozen ward committees many of whom have quite substantial balances in hand. An indication of the ward virility is shown by the total membership figures there being 1,205 men and 610 women. The ward accounts and also those of the women's sections are individually summarised in the published report and from this summary we also note there are no fewer than 20,358 affiliated members. The accounts just presented include a profit item of £521 6s. raised by a three-days bazaar last October, where on one day the attendance was well over 2,000. We are glad to see that the Young People's organisation has made great strides and that it has now a membership of 150. The following summary of accounts is worth producing.

month, but of the number of members given there is a leakage of some 600 who are over three months in arrears. Notwithstanding that a solid membership of 1,607 remains and it has been decided to appoint commissioned collectors with a view of eliminating the leakage. The total income from individual membership is £127 14s. 4d.—a jump from £15 in 1922. There is a total income of £778 13s. 1½d.—practically all locally raised. This constitutes a highly creditable year's work.

Secretary and Agent: A. G. Moyle, 16, Lowfield Street, Dartford.

The report of the Houghton-le-Spring D.L.P. is prefaced by a roll of honour, which hundreds of Divisional Parties will envy, in the shape of a long list of public representatives of Labour. Beginning with Mr. R. Richardson, M.P., there follows five members of the County Council, nine members of the U.D.C., five members of the Guardians, 19 members of the three Rural District Councils, together with seven magistrates. A Labour poll of 11,115 at the County Council elections was one of the achievements of the past year, while, in addition to that Labour majorities were secured upon the Houghton-le-Spring

	Income.	Expenditure			Credit	Debit		
	£ s. d.	£	s.	d.	£ s. d.	£	s.	d.
General Fund ....	629 10 10	627	1	1½	2 9	8½		
Election Fund ....	166 16 5½	358	16	10	—	192	0	4½
Development Fund ....	866 2 8	267	1	0½	599	1	7½	—
Social Purposes Fund ....	276 18 9	276	18	9	—	—	—	—
Publicity Fund ....	49 0 0	49	0	0	—	—	—	—
Bazaar Fund ....	762 7 11	762	7	11	—	—	—	—
	2750 16 7½	2341	5	8	601 11 4	192	0	4½
Nett Balance in hand, £409 10s. 11½d.								

Secretary and Agent: J. Cobb, 63, London Road, Derby.

The report of the Dartford D.L.P. gives some excellent membership figures and some sound observations thereon. Membership campaigns have been conducted, and membership secretaries appointed in some trade union branches while various activities have been organised with which to increase the membership of the Party. As a result, 1,188 men have been enrolled and 1,037 women. Four-fifths of the membership pay on a basis of twopence per

Urban and Rural Council, and the Board of Guardians, while *majorities were secured upon nearly every Parish Council in the Division*. We are pleased to see that successful registration work is being accomplished. During the year 126 claims were sent in of which 121 were allowed. Satisfactory progress by the Women's Section is reported, and at White Leas where there are only 113 women electors upon the register, no less than 75 are fully paid-up members of the Women Sections! The report indicates that the Party is not content with there

successes, but constantly indulges in further educational and propaganda work.

Secretary and Agent : H. Bainbridge, 34, Mount Road West, Sunderland.

The annual report of Ilkeston D.L.P. as a document hardly reflects the good work that is being put in throughout the Division. We would like to have seen Ilkeston, Ripley, Heanor and Codnor local balance sheets, or at least summaries of them, embodied in the divisional annual report so that members of the Party in the Division might at a glance envisage the whole activities of Labour throughout the area. The loyalty and comradeship of Local Parties should always find expression in co-operation to produce a report which should show all Labour work in a Division, and we have no doubt that if the Parties named would collaborate in the matter next year a tale of progress and accomplishment could be totalled which would do justice to the efforts which both local officers and divisional officers are putting in. The report indicates that propaganda is not being lost sight of.

Some vigorous ward work is a feature of the annual report of the Norwich Labour Party and a great advance has been made in this direction during the past year. There are now some 14 ward associations with an approximate membership of 2,600. Meetings are held twice a month and it is stated to be possible for the agent in the course of one week's visiting, taking a different ward each night, to meet a total of eight or nine hundred people engaged in ward work during that period. It would seem from this computation that an average of 50 to 60 per cent. attendance is being maintained. A house-to-house canvass has been commenced for membership purposes and so far has proved an unqualified success. 43,750 circulars were distributed during the year through the ward machinery, and it would seem that the ward activities are resulting in the training of an increased number of good speakers. The Guardians elections last year resulted in a jump from 11 members to 21—just short of a majority, but though, at the municipal elections, the votes were everywhere increased, no additional seats were won.

Secretary : Mr. G. F. Johnson, 16, Pelham Road, Norwich. Agent : Mr. J. Brooksbank, Labour Party Offices, Guildhall Corner Chambers, Norwich.

It is an indication that a County Division is being organised on right lines when it is shown that a substantial income is derived from an effort shared among Local Parties and committees spread throughout the Division. The predominant prosperity of but one Local Party in a constituency is almost always a sure indication of too much centralisation and the existence of neglected areas. We are therefore glad to notice in the balance sheet of the Holland-with-Boston D.L.P. that a local effort by which £312 has been raised is shared by a really large number of local committees and women's sections. The latter altogether have made a useful contribution of £25. 1925 was the first year the Divisional Party had been entirely responsible for financing the organisation and the figures attained reflect considerable credit on the organiser. The total receipts are £549, and we note that there has been a 32 per cent. increase in individual membership.

Secretary and Agent : Mr. H. N. St. Dunstan White, Labour Party Offices, Sheep Market, Spalding, Lincs.

King's Norton is the first breach which Labour has made in the stone wall of Brummagem's Imperialism ; we turn, therefore, with special interest to note the progress of the King's Norton D.L.P. for the past year. A more than usual emphasis on the indoor work of the Party is noticeable and combined as this is with a record of advance in each ward it has made us wish that other reports had given an equal insight into the all-important work of records. We will not tire our readers with extracts from the consistent record of outdoor progress (to use a relative term) that has been made, but a visit to the King's Norton office impressed us with the thoroughness with which records are being made and used in organising further efforts. All present membership is already indexed in alphabetical and polling district order, as also is lots of supplementary valuable information. The local Co-operative Society membership is also being ascertained and reduced to usable data in the same way,

while the membership of affiliated organisations is in a fair way for being recorded. As hinted, the report bears evidence that records collected are put to immediate use. The agent reminds his Party that his report is a serial story and will be "continued in our next." In that report we shall be deeply interested to discover what success has attended some very special efforts that are being made to rope in a number of union branches not affiliated to the Birmingham Borough Party.

Secretary and Agent : Mr. G. Morris, 1,393, Pershore Road, Selly Park, Birmingham.

Another of the Parties to bring the income from individual membership into three figures is the North Hackney Labour Party. The income for the past year is £107 9s. 6d., the membership standing at 654—an increase of 150 on the year. The present agent is Mr. W. H. Jacob, the chairman of the Labour Agents' Association, whose work, however, covers only a portion of the report dealt with. We note that a resolve has been made to turn the Party into a four-figure Party during the present year, and certainly the balance sheet discloses that there is a live and capable movement easily able to accomplish this. Exclusive of balances and subsidy from candidate the local movement has been responsible for approximately £450 of the year's income.

Secretary and Agent : Mr. W. H. Jacob, 125, Chatsworth Road, Clapton, London, E.5.

#### PUBLICITY FOR POOR LOCAL LABOUR PARTIES.

##### Article III.

##### THE WINDOW DISPLAY.

By Wilfred B. Hargreaves.

"How can we give a window display of Labour politics?" the average trade unionist John Bull will ask. One sees window displays of merchandise, of articles of wear, of theatrical etceteras, and there are (but not often nowadays) displays of nothing at all in empty shops! Well, it isn't hard to display Labour politics in a window. It was done in the 1920 Wrekin election on a small scale, and I make bold to say that it will be done on a much larger scale in future elections.

A telling picture is better than a telling message, and a telling window display

is better than a telling picture. Why? or as Gadfly would say "How come?" Because a picture is easier to visualise than a collection of words, and because a concrete example (concrete in the abstract sense, Mr. Editor!) such as a loaf, is easier to visualise than a picture..

In the near future much ink will be used to abuse the collier and the workman generally. Much less ink will be used to show that the collier and the general workman cannot be held responsible for the present lamentable condition of the coal industry, and that other parties are responsible for that state of things.

It is possible, and would be helpful, to show by means of lumps of coal, the difference between pit-head and back-yard door costs : the portion taken out of the industry by the men, royalties and colliery-owners respectively ; and if the display window was large enough something of the unhealthy and laborious conditions of employment down the mine could be shown too, as well as the pleasant conditions of the mine and royalty owners.

I have seen one Labour window display which was certainly effective—the pre-war and post-war loaves of bread! The display didn't get the Labour candidate in, but it helped to pave the way for his victory four years later.

Wherein lay its appeal? Simply here—the dullest intelligence (and there are many of dim understanding) can see the difference between dissimilar objects. He (the dull one) is attacked too, from an angle, and by a means, which is unexpected, and against which his mental powers cannot protect him!

He is "stampeded" along the way we want him to go. I infinitely prefer a convinced and thoughtful voter, but we must face the fact that many voters do not think very much, and many years will elapse before they cease to allow others to do their thinking for them.

So then, let us employ the useful material we have in our Local Labour Parties, wisely, understandingly, and in a comradely spirit, when we shall reap, if we faint not. Well says the old slogan :]

"Build to-day, then, strong and sure,  
With a firm and ample base ;  
And, ascending and secure—  
Shall to-morrow find its place."

## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

*Question.*—An unusual incident occurred at the count in connection with our Guardians' elections. One of our candidates at the first count was in by two votes. Upon a recount one paper was found to be included which belonged to another candidate, which left our man in by one vote. The Tory scrutineers then demanded a scrutiny of the ballot papers whereupon it was discovered that three ballot papers clearly marked for the Labour candidate did not bear the official stamp and were consequently disqualified. Our people are naturally very sore about this and rather suspicious that everything was not above board. Is it possible to secure a scrutiny of the ballot papers, and if so what steps should be taken?

*Answer.*—Although unsatisfactory we are afraid there is nothing which is altogether unusual in the proceedings outlined in this question. The fact that one ballot paper in the course of a count may find its way to the wrong candidate is by no means a proof of fraud but rather of the fallibility of the human factor. Mistakes can and will occur with the present method of counting and recording of votes and the only check is the vigilance of counting agents and the privilege which has been exercised in this case by our opponents to take a recount.

The question of the three votes which were found to be void for want of official marks is another matter, but even here a reflection on the Presiding Officer whose fault it was might not be justified. We presume the actual check of ballot papers in the box was correct. But under the present system it has been very easy for a Presiding Officer to slip when issuing ballot papers in a rush and to fail to make the necessary official mark which is required in order to give the ballot paper the hall-mark of validity. It is, of course, conceivable that a Presiding Officer might hand a known opponent a ballot paper where the mark had been deliberately omitted, or that in a known stronghold of one Party a Presiding Officer favourable to another Party might deliberately omit the stamping of a number of papers in order to minimise his opponents' success. But this is far-fetched, and though we do not like the present method of voting, and the trust reposed in officials who are so often hostile to Labour, we cannot think that

this particular fraud is likely. Indeed, there are others far more easy to accomplish and unlikely of detection.

It may interest our enquirer to observe that in the Economy Bill now before Parliament, there is a clause (reprinted in full in our March issue) which revises the present method of impressing the official mark on ballot papers. Under the present law, a ballot paper must be stamped with an official mark *immediately* before being handed to the elector. If, through any inadvertence, the paper is not stamped, the vote is not valid and at every General Election a considerable number of votes are lost in this way and great dissatisfaction caused. Under the clause the official mark would be printed or stamped on the ballot papers prior to the poll. This would not only prevent the loss of votes from failure at the station to stamp the papers but would also effect a considerable economy which cannot be closely estimated. Returning Officers who have been consulted agree that the risk of forgery of ballot papers will not be increased by the change, but a further safeguard is introduced in the Schedule giving the Returning Officer direct power—which he does not at present possess—to exclude forged ballot papers at the counting of the votes.

As to that part of the question enquiring as to the possibilities of a further scrutiny we would not under the circumstances advise this, but in any case the advice of the National Labour Party should always be sought before embarking on a challenge to an election in the courts, and, of course, professional advice is necessary.

In the case of a municipal election the precise distinctions between recount, scrutiny and petition applying to a Parliamentary election do not obtain. The election may be questioned, if at all, by an election petition on the ground (in this case) that the successful candidate "was not duly elected by a majority of lawful votes."

Under the Municipal Elections (Corrupt and Illegal Practices) Act, 1884, elaborate rules are prescribed for the presentation of municipal election petitions, but the cost is considerable and the procedure complicated. It is hardly matter for further elaboration here.

*Question.*—We have recently had a selection conference in this division and a candidate has been selected who I think would not get the endorsement of our Executive. The conference was carried away by a speech and on calmer reflection our Executive seem of the opinion that a mistake has been made. What do you advise in the matter?

*Answer.*—Evidently an interesting situation is developing in the constituency referred to. But there is a woeful lack of understanding displayed in our correspondent's query. The highest authority in any division is the Divisional Labour Party, whose special general meeting constitutes what is sometimes spoken of as the selection conference. The choice of a selection meeting is final so far as a division is concerned, and no executive can override a decision properly come to. It is not for them to endorse but to send the name on to the National Executive of the Party for their endorsement. We are aware that it sometimes happens even the nominee of the Local E.C. is turned down. This, however, does not affect their authority in the matter and to attempt to override a free and proper choice of the Party is simply seeking for trouble.

We can conceive a case where an Executive may be aware of some special circumstances that were not present to the minds of the conference, and in such case the obvious thing to do is to seek the advice of the National Labour Party, and its officers. We have known of instances where a division of opinion occurred between a selection meeting and an Executive owing to the financial situation not having been thoroughly thrashed out, resulting in a selection meeting light-heartedly selecting a candidate and leaving the Executive to find ways and means of running him. This of course is not playing the game and the National Labour Party fortunately now insist upon the financial aspect of a selection being discussed at the meeting at which a candidate is selected, and upon the liability being there definitely fixed. It is far better to adjourn a selection conference for a discussion throughout the district upon ways and means than to do something akin to marrying in haste and repenting at leisure.

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## LAW AND PRACTICE

[Under this heading are found brief and chatty explanations of points of commoner interest concerning the Law and Practice of Elections. Readers are invited to suggest points for notice herein, but are reminded that suggestions made may not necessarily be dealt with in the next issue.—Ed.]

### GOOD FAITH IN THE CONDUCT OF ELECTIONS.

In the columns of the "Labour Organiser" we have always urged the due and full observance of all the legal provisions relating to corrupt and illegal practices applicable to the particular election being conducted.

We have taken this line primarily not because we believe the Corrupt Practices Acts are sufficient or uniformly equitable in themselves, but because the general tone of these Acts is healthy, and they were conceived in a spirit of justice. And because the Labour Party is the poorest Party in the State it has most to gain by a proper observance of the law. But while this latter fact provides no highly moral reason for observance it should be remembered as a corrective for agents and workers who may be disposed to stretch a point here and there. After all it is up to the Labour Party to set a standard, and it is some help in doing so to remember that Parliamentary victories at the polls are no less possible when conducted according to the legal rules of the game than when those rules are defied and derided.

Now good faith enters into this matter very much more than one would at first suppose. Mr. Justice Vaughan Williams once said: "It is quite true that the Act lays down most stringent rules as to the conduct of candidates. It may be said that these rules go so far into detail as to make it very difficult for either the candidate or his election agent to go through an election without in some way or other transgressing against the multifarious provisions of these Acts, but the answer to this is that the Act takes every possible care by the 22nd and 23rd Sections that no candidate who has tried his best to conduct his election purely and fairly shall suffer thereby."

We will quote Sections 22 and 23 of the Corrupt Practices Act, 1883, in order that our readers may exactly understand what was intended by the learned judge.

Section 22: "Where, upon the trial of an election petition respecting an election for a county or borough, the election court report that a candidate at such election has been guilty by his agents of the offence of treating and undue influence, and illegal practice, or of any of such offences, in reference to such election, and the election court further report that the candidate has proved to the court—

- (a) That no corrupt or illegal practice was committed at such election by the candidate or his election agent, and the offences mentioned in the said report were committed contrary to the orders and without the sanction or connivance of such candidate or his election agent; and
- (b) That such candidate and his election agent took all reasonable means for preventing the commission of corrupt and illegal practices at such election; and
- (c) That the offences mentioned in the said report were of a trivial, unimportant, and limited character; and
- (d) That in all other respects the election was free from any corrupt or illegal practice on the part of such candidate and of his agents; then the election of such candidate shall not, by reason of the offences mentioned in such report, be void, nor shall the candidate be subject to any incapacity under this Act."

Section 23: "Where, on application made, it is shown to the High Court or to an election court by such evidence as seems to the court sufficient—

- (a) That any act of omission of a candidate at any election, or of his election agent or of any other agent or person would, by reason of being a payment, engagement, employment, or contract in contravention of this Act, or being the payment of a sum or the incurring of expense in excess of any maximum amount allowed by this Act, or of otherwise being in contravention of any of the provisions of this Act, be but for this section an illegal practice, payment, employment, or hiring; and
- (b) That such act or omission arose from inadvertence or from accidental miscalculation or from some other reasonable cause of a like nature, and in any case did not arise from any want of good faith; and
- (c) That such notice of the application

has been given in the county or borough for which the election was held as to the court seems fit ; and under the circumstances it seems to the court to be just that the candidate and the said election and other agent and person, or any of them, should not be subject to any of the consequences under this Act of the said act or omission, the court may make an order allowing such act or omission to be an exception from the provisions of this Act which would otherwise make the same an illegal practice, payment, employment, or hiring, and thereupon such candidate, agent, or person shall not be subject to any of the consequences under this Act of the said act or omission."

Now we come back to where we were. Of those two Sections the first exonerates the candidate under certain circumstances where a petition has been presented against him and the second indicates a way to the candidate against whom no petition may have been presented for avoiding the consequences of some careless act which has been discovered. An application for relief may of course be made as a counter-application to a petition or as part of a petition.

If the reader will carefully follow Section 22 again, it will be noted that to procure absolution the candidate must satisfy four points—

- (a) He and his agent must be themselves guiltless and both agent and candidate must have issued orders forbidding such offences as were actually afterwards committed.
- (b) He and his agent must have taken all reasonable means for preventing offences.
- (c) Where offences have been committed they must be trivial, unimportant and of a limited character.
- (d) Apart from such offences there must have been no other either on the part of the candidate or agents (meaning now not only the election agent but everyone else whose help was accepted).

Now we are profoundly convinced that taking all four provisions together it is not a sufficient answer if an election agent can only say that he has committed no offences and that he was innocent of anything wrong being done.

He must take "all reasonable means for preventing the commission of

corrupt and illegal practices." It is here that the question of good faith enters in, and this phrase is actually used in Section 23. Many a man might be inclined to connive at some offence or to profess ignorance of it if ignorance alone was sufficient. *The law expressly insists on an aggressive vigilance and active preventive measures on the part of both the candidate and election agent.* It will not absolve the candidate in any other case.

The point, then, is what steps shall the candidate and agent take? It is obviously not sufficient for a candidate to enter a court with the answer that though some offences were committed of a trivial nature he had left such matters to his agent. It is in our opinion well for a candidate to be able to prove that he has, either by some written stipulation, or verbal instruction, drawn attention to the necessity of avoiding offences. A candidate is in the safest position who not only gives an instruction but who from time to time during an election draws attention to it, and personally enquires whether the law is being observed.

The part an election agent is expected to play is, however, very much more onerous and definite. The election agent is the business man of the election. He is the officer responsible in law ; he is presumed to have knowledge and if he hasn't knowledge the judges will be disposed to blame him to an even greater extent. It is up to the agent to definitely take steps to prevent abuses and the law will examine those steps if he is challenged, and the judges will require to be very thoroughly satisfied that the means for preventing the commission of corrupt and illegal practices were both reasonable and effective. If the petition is one for relief under Section 23, the question of good faith is after all one of fact, and a matter to be probed into. The agent's machinery *ought* to have been watertight, and judging by past cases *the extent* to which that machinery was or was not fool-proof will be taken as some criterion of the agent's good faith. We therefore come to the point as to *what are* "reasonable means" to prevent the commission of offences or to avoid "inadvertence," "accidental miscalculation" and similar things.

The first step a Labour agent should take in a Parliamentary election is to

obtain the Labour Party's election parcel. Therein will be found a number of warning notices embodying the main provisions of the Corrupt Practices Acts. These should be affixed in every committee-room. We, in fact, have even gone further and have issued supplementary warning notices and even taken receipts for these forms from sub-agents going to distant stations. We have followed this up by enquiries and reports as to whether the notices were displayed. But even this is not sufficient. Notices on committee-room walls, like bye-laws stuck in out of the way places, are not always read. There must be definite and constant reminders throughout the election to all classes of workers, and meetings of workers should never be allowed to pass without reference to the matters that are prohibited.

That much, then, by way of precept. What by way of practice? Offences which are in the category of which we are speaking will not involve the graver crimes of bribery, false declaration, personation, etc., against which the agent will obviously safeguard by not allowing circumstances to develop which could generate such offences. The matters we are concerned with here are generally more trivial and the *real safeguard is the possession of a system.*

Take, for instance, offences connected with payments. No election agent will ever impress a judge if it is shown that he was in the habit of carrying about in his pockets the election fund or parts of it, or that he loosely supplied workers with accommodation monies from time to time. A cheque book and definite entries, petty cash book and clear vouchers, are all matters which might impress a judge. Pencil marks, erasures, figures obviously entered up

after the election, or the production of a book not genuinely kept during the election would all be matters surrounded with suspicion. An agent might quite readily lose a really good case through the want of conviction which badly-kept books, or a badly-arranged financial system, would involve.

Or, again, take offences surrounding the question of employment. If it were shown that an agent loosely deputed to others the engagement of his staff, the employment of messengers, etc., no judge would absolve him from the consequences of any illegality. Appointments should be under the hand of the election agent, and he alone should satisfy himself that his employee is both properly appointed and trustworthy, and capable of carrying out orders into the bargain.

Or take offences concerning the use of illegal committee-rooms or hackney carriages. An agent who could not say after the election what cars or whose cars had been lent to him, in short, if he hadn't a proper system of records, would not convince a judge that he had taken proper precautions against one of these carriages being a forbidden one. He might even be asked for a list of names and copies of letters sent out asking for vehicles. Nor would an agent who had left the engagement of committee-rooms wholly in local and inexperienced hands be likely to be excused, if some of these rooms turned out to be open to petition. Given these things and proof of a consistent intention to carry out the law, supplemented by the production of clean records and accounts, minor offences need not then cause such great anxiety; though the means to get rid of their consequences will always prove expensive.

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## THE SECRETARY'S PAGE.

### HELP AND HINTS IN SEASON.

Visiting a constituency the other day with which we had at one time a passing connection during a bye-election, we made some enquiries concerning several doughty workers who assisted us at the time. To our surprise we found several of these persons were not members of the Party. They had never even joined the Party, though at two or three successive elections they had come along and rendered excellent help.

Though the facts on this occasion came as rather a shock to us, we have long had a regard for the existence of backwoodsmen in other places, using that term not in a derisive sense but because it is an expressive one. There is a certain psychology which simply cannot support a sustained interest in politics. There are lots of people with this trace, particularly among sporting enthusiasts. They have not the patience or constancy to retain a regular membership. Some of them may actually be members of the Labour Party through their trade unions, but there are others, and we ourselves have found them not only among the class above mentioned, but among the shop-keeping classes, whose political conscience is apparently never aroused except during the universal hubbub of a General Election.

Now are these people worthy of that contempt which the year in and year out enthusiast is ready to bestow upon them? The backwoodsmen have votes, they are citizens; they are products of an educational system and of a civilisation yellowed by the gutter press. But we want them, and if we can only get them at an election once in three years, they are still worth having and recording and keeping touch with.

Our own experience is that lots of these people possess tremendous vigour when an election comes along. They seem born to the work and if their enthusiasm does not last it is at any rate all devouring while it is on them, and their influence is sometimes tremendous.

Now our point in mentioning this matter is that after a few endeavours to get these people to meetings or to make them members, they are often permitted to lapse out of sight altogether, and

though they may find the Party after an election has begun a part at least of their value has been lost. We believe it is a good thing to keep lists of workers from election to election, and at every election to compare the present Party strength in this direction with the last election, or even the one before that. In this way the backwoodsmen who are not on current Party lists can be discovered, mobilised and trotted out to time.

The officers of the Labour Party are a long-suffering race, but we recently received a complaint which we think is well grounded. A local Party was to be addressed on a question of organisation. A speaker had been brought quite a considerable distance to address the meeting and arrangements for a special meeting were in fact made a month before hand. Yet for fully an hour before the speaker had a chance, the Party discussed and wrangled, discussed and wrangled again over the most trivial details of Party finance which should never have come before a general meeting at all.

Now the National Labour Party and its officers get their mead of criticism at all times, even, we fancy, when it's only the weather. The habit of grousing at the Labour Party is, in fact, an obsession with some members. Yet is there not something to be said in the opposite direction? The time of Labour Party officers is at least as valuable as that of those which attend the local meetings, and if the question of courtesy does not occur there is at least the point that the person referred to had travelled eighty miles, had come by special engagement, and at much inconvenience, to a particularised time.

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Now trifling as the above question is, it doesn't stand alone. We have heard complaints in Local Parties again and again that the National Labour Party doesn't do this or that or the other thing—often something that has been considered and found impracticable. Here is an instance to show blame on the other side. Within the last month or two several cases have come to our notice where the services of propagandists were offered in January of this year. No notice was taken of the Head Office communications till nearly three months had gone by when there was grumbling and complaints because the propagandists were not then available.

Our plea for a more reasonable and considerate frame of mind might be urged in relation to other matters. There is the question of literature. Frequently we hear criticisms of Labour Party publications. Well, it is at any rate clean bait though it may not be quite so biting or attractively dished as the venomous misrepresentations of the Primrose League. But really we have discovered Parties where practically nobody has ever seen Labour Party pamphlets or leaflets for the simple reason that none were ever bought, and circulars and specimens not considered. We feel sure none of the readers of the "Labour Organiser" will be guilty of this matter after this.

There is another growse at the Labour Party all too common within the ranks. The Party doesn't send its big speakers. The great guns do not come and stand upon the parish pump spiriting an audience from the hedgerows, the ditches and the sprouting wheat. We won't labour this question for we have dealt with it before in the "L.O." but how can one man or two men or three men whose names are always being mentioned, perform the great public work which is their portion in the Party if at the same time they are to be sowing seed on virgin soil in the back lands of Britain?

Now to change the subject. We recently had two problems concerning county constituencies to consider. The first was that of a county division which

formerly raised a good deal of money by constituency functions. As the Party has developed the local units have become stronger and more self-reliant. Where formerly there was one effort at money raising for the whole constituency there are now several efforts each however for local needs and the central organisation hardly dares put up a similar effort of its own for fear of competing with the localities. This is a problem which applies to several constituencies we know. No one would wish to retard or discourage local endeavours, but a case can certainly now be put up for a reconsideration of the past basis on which these Divisional Parties have been financed. There needs to be a larger contribution from the localities to the centre than was originally thought proper.

The next situation we have noted is that of a large rambling county constituency where central meetings of the Party are difficult, and where it is out of the question to get big central gatherings of members at any rate without some very special attraction. Local rank and file conferences have been found stimulating in these circumstances and half-a-dozen of such spread over the constituency have sufficed. The attendance has varied, but the benefit has been marked and it has been possible to give more attention to the beginnings of organisation than a central gathering would have allowed.

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(Concluded from page 63.)

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